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ABSTRACT

Florida's education system must creatively confront a number of challenges if it is to fulfill its obligation to the state's students. This paper presents an overview of challenges to the Florida school system in 1995, some of which include rising student enrollment, an increase in racial and ethnic minority populations, and a tax base that is failing to keep pace with growth. With regard to student performance, large numbers of high school graduates are not prepared for successful college work. However, Florida has one of the most equally distributed systems of public school funding in the country, the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Although the overall fiscal health of the state remains strong, education has not benefitted because of an increasingly constrained state government revenue base and competition from other public-sector programs. In addition, a lawsuit has been filed that alleges inadequate funding in three areas: the additional fiscal burdens caused by rapidly increasing numbers of students who are expensive to educate; the state-mandated improvement and accountability plan (Blueprint 2000) that requires higher achievement levels; and underfunded, state-mandated transportation services. Other concerns are the maintenance of the fundamental equity of the state's funding formula and funding-formula changes that negatively affect special-needs students. Blueprint 2000, the statewide plan for school-based management, requires school-improvement plans, school-advisory councils, and school report cards. Another challenge is to focus attention on education in a state in which school-age children comprise only 16 percent of the population. (LMI)

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A TIGHTENING OF THE SCREWS:

THE POLITICS OF SCHOOL FINANCE IN FLORIDA

STATE OF THE STATES 1995

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STATE OF THE STATES 1995

Carolyn D. Herrington
and
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Florida has one of the largest and one of the fastest growing student populations in the country. It currently ranks fourth in the country in the size of its K-12 student population and enrollment growth is over four times the national average. It ranks eighth in higher education enrollment (Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, 1992).

Student and System Growth

Between 1990 and the year 2010, the number of children in Florida ages 0 to 19, will increase from 3.2 million to 4.1 million, a 29.3% increase in two decades (Weller, 1991). (However, the adult population will outstrip the child population in growth, increasing by 42.2% in the same time period). These staggering growth rates translate into equally high enrollment increases in the public schooling system. In 1992-93, the state's public school enrollments (FTEs) passed the two million mark. Another half a million students were enrolled in the state's universities and community colleges. It is estimated that by the year 1999-2000, public school enrollments will have increased by 27.3% over the 1990 enrollment. The pressures of growth will be even greater in the higher education sector. Starting in 1995-96 and continuing throughout the next decade, the graduation of the baby-boom echo from high school is projected to increase dramatically the size of the traditional college-age population. Between 1990 and the year 2010, Florida public high school graduates are projected to increase from 88,000 to 136,000, a 54.5% increase over a twenty-year period as the leading edge of the baby boom echo leaves the public schools. Between 1993 and 2002, community college enrollments (FTEs) are estimated to increase 41.9% over the ten years. The state university system is estimating an equally staggering growth rate of 33.7% between 1991-92 and 1999-2000. See Table One. The challenges associated simply with meeting the personnel, facilities and instructional materials needs created by this phenomenal rate of growth are straining the state's capacity. It is predicted that in the year 2000, 11,500 new public school teachers will be needed to meet the increased enrollments in that year alone. This growth is also occurring at a time when the number of households with children is declining as the population ages and as other demands on public resources are growing.

The growth in the number of students is running parallel to a concurrent growth in the type of students the educational system is being asked to serve. Increasingly, Florida's schools are receiving students who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups. Currently, 38.6 percent of the total pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school population are members of

racial and ethnic minority groups. Between 1975 and 1994 the percentage of Hispanic students, as a proportion of the total pre-kindergarten through grade twelve population, more than doubled from 6.4% to 13.8%. During this same period, the white student population declined ten percent, from 70 percent of the total in 1975 to 60 percent of the Florida public school population in 1994. Between 1975 and 1994, the percentage of African-Americans as a proportion of the total pre-kindergarten through grade twelve student population increased only about two percent from 22.5% to 24.8%. Minority enrollments in higher education fall behind those of the K-12 sector. In Fall 1994, state university enrollments were 75.6% white, 12.0% African-American and 12.4% Hispanic. The community college enrollments for Fall 1993 were 70.4% white, 11.7% African-American and 12.9% Hispanic. The percentage of students who are minority will continue to increase. It is estimated that by the year 2010 a majority of Florida's students will be minority, the highest minority growth rate in the country. Furthermore, by the year 2015 minority students will comprise the majority of entry-level workers.

Given the influx of immigrant students to Florida's schools, it is not surprising that increasing numbers of students begin their education with limited facility in English. These students enter Florida as refugees from war, civil strife, and economic hardship in Central and South America, Southeast Asia and other locales. In the 1994-95 school year, over 85,000 students were enrolled in bilingual or English as a Second Language programs - a six-fold increase since 1987. Of the students participating in these classes, most were Hispanic. Dade County presents a striking example of the state school system's linguistic diversity. In this South Florida county, more than one-quarter of public school students were born in foreign countries. One hundred and twenty countries of origin and more than 65 different languages are represented by Dade County students. Spanish outranks English as the primary language of parents of Dade County public school students with English and Creole ranking second and third respectively. In 1994-95, Dade's 43,684 children enrolled in English as A Second Language, represented 14% of all its pupils. Another challenge of diversity for Florida is the growth in the number of children with disabilities in the school system. Between 1986 and 1993, students in need of special education increased by nearly a half (55%) in Florida. Some of these students enter school with nonexistent, or only rudimentary, command of the English language.

Table Two shows the fiscal impact of growth in these areas in the public school system. Between 1983-84 and 1995-96, the K-12 basic FTEs (these are students who are not considered to have special education needs) grew from 1.3 million to 1.7 million or at a rate of 29.8%. The at-risk FTEs, increased at a radically greater rate - 743%. Exceptional educational FTEs (handicapped and gifted students) increased 143%.

Student and System Performance

How successful is the Florida school system in preparing its students for adulthood? One means to gauge how well the graduates of Florida's public schools perform academically is to review the results of a testing requirement of entering college students. All students entering Florida state universities or community colleges must take one of four tests to assess

their skill levels in reading, writing and mathematics. If they perform below the established cut-off scores, they are required to enroll in college preparatory courses and must pass the courses before they may enroll in college-level courses. In 1993-94, 78% of Florida's college students scored at or above the cut-off in reading and writing and 70% scored at or above the cut-off in mathematics. Altogether, only 58% of the students were deemed ready for college-level coursework in all three areas. Performance differs significantly by ethnicity. African-Americans passing rates for all three areas were 36%. Hispanic rates were 42% (Cullar, 1995). The cut-off scores are not high. The cut-off scores for two of the four tests that students may choose to take, the SAT and ACT, are 740 and 14, respectively. These tests indicate that large numbers of Florida students are graduating from high school and entering college without the foundation for successful college-level work.

The most widely used college admissions test in Florida is the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Florida students in 1994 had an average composite (reading and mathematics combined) score of 879. The national composite average was 902. This represents a decline since 1986 of 16 points. The U.S. average declined over that same time period by 4 points. (Miller, 1994)

There has been a steady increase in the number of minority students in Florida taking the SAT, as well as the number of minority test-takers as a percentage of total SAT takers in the state. Between 1978 and 1994, the number of African-American Florida high school students taking the SAT increased from 8.7 percent of the total to 13.3 percent of total SAT takers. Between 1978 and 1994, the percent of Hispanic high school students taking the SAT rose from 3.7 to 15.1. Overall, 31% of Florida's SAT takers were members of racial and ethnic minority groups which have historically scored below the mean. The comparable national statistic is 22 percent. With the exception of Asians, minority group students tend to score lower on the SAT than do white students. The composite SAT score for white students in Florida in 1994 was 926. For African-American students, the composite score was 729; and for Hispanics, 837. (Miller, 1994)

Securing Resources

For 1995-96, the state of Florida appropriated approximately $11.1 billion to operate its educational system including pre-kindergarten programs, elementary, middle and high schools, state universities and community colleges and adult, community and vocational education programs. Per-student spending in Florida, after rising significantly in the 70s and early 80s is now failing to keep up with growth. After allowing for inflation and rising numbers of students, state general-revenue spending per pupil is beginning to fall. In 1985-86, per student general revenue spending for public schools, was $1,760. 1994-95 spending was $3,350. However, if adjusted for inflation, 1994-95 spending is worth only $1,645, a seven percent decline over the 10-year period. Higher education has experienced an even more dramatic decline. Between 1989 and 1993, state university per student funding not adjusted for inflation declined from $7200 to $5200, a 27.8% decrease.

In 1992-93, Florida ranked in the middle of other states (23rd) in public school

revenue per pupil (ADA) and in current expenditures per elementary and secondary pupil (26th). However, it ranked somewhat lower in effort. In current per pupil expenditures for public elementary and secondary as a percent of per capita income (1992-93), Florida ranked 31st. Some of the discrepancy between expenditures and effort is explained by the demographic structure of Florida. Florida has the highest median age of any state (37.2), meaning that a larger proportion of its citizens are not of school age. Comparative teacher salary rankings also place Florida in the middle of other states. Florida ranks 27th in estimated average salaries as reported by NEA (1992-93). Another more positive indication of effort is the pupil-teacher ratio. In Florida, the 17.6 ratio places Florida 15th in the country (1991). Comparative state rankings in higher education show relatively similar findings. State support of higher education on a per pupil basis places Florida 15th in the country with $4497 for 1990-91. However, Florida drops to 24th in support as a percent of per capita income (24%). Comparing faculty salaries at universities nationwide places Florida as 41st among the fifty states. (Brizius & Foster, 1994)

Florida adopted the FEFP (the Florida Education Finance Program) in 1973 to assure equitable educational opportunity throughout Florida. The FEFP is designed to recognize variations in the value of local property tax bases as well as variations in program cost factors, district cost differentials, and differences due to sparsity and dispersion of student population in per student cost for equivalent educational programs. Florida has one of the most equalized systems of public school funding in the country. In 1992-93, approximately 97.17% of the $8.3 billion provided for operation of Florida's schools was equalized across the districts.

The level of funding for the FEFP is generated primarily by multiplying the number of full-time equivalent students (FTE) in each of the educational programs by cost factors to obtain weighted FTE's (WFTE). The WFTE is then multiplied by a base student allocation and by a district cost differential as well as a number of other calculations. The result of the computation determines the total funding for the FEFP, both state and local funds. Program cost factors are calculated on a three-year average, are specified by the Legislature and reflect the relative cost differences among the educational programs in FEFP. The base cost factor is 1.000 which represents the cost for the basic programs for Grades 4-8. The cost factors for all other educational programs, such as Specific Learning Disability, Vocational-Technical Programs, and Dropout Prevention, are indexed to 1.000.

The overall fiscal health of the state remains strong. Florida was severely hurt by the economic recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s but it is rebounding well. However, education has not benefited as well as might be expected from the overall increase in state economic activity because of an increasingly constrained state government revenue base and fierce competition from other public sector programs. By constitutional prohibition, Florida cannot impose a state personal income tax.

Demographically-fueled increases in dependent populations, federal mandates covering Medicaid, and court orders binding service delivery in juvenile justice, mental health, foster care and corrections have all increased the percentage of the state budget going to these areas and limited state budgeting flexibility. For example, Medicaid expenditures by the state have

been increasing at over 30% annually in recent years. In 1985-86, education accounted for 62% of state general-revenue spending. By 1994-95, this had slipped to only 50%. Conversely, the appropriation for Medicaid represented 6.2% of general revenue in 1985-86 and grew to 17% by 1994-95. Corrections as a percentage of state general revenue spending increased from 5.0% to 7.9% over the same 10 year period.

The Florida Lottery weakened recently. This past year (1994-95) it generated lower than anticipated revenues resulting in districts having to engage in mid-year budget adjustments of $40M to accommodate the shortfall.

In 1992, voters of the state of Florida enacted two constitutional amendments which will have significant impact on the state's ability to raise funds for education. The first requires the State to establish a budget stabilization fund amounting to 5% of the general revenue fund by fiscal year 1998-99. This will further limit state budgetary discretion by requiring that the State lay aside over $600 million in the next five years. Secondly, property tax assessment increases will be restricted to 3 percent annually. Two years later in 1994, voters also overwhelmingly approved a tax cap that limits state government budgetary growth to the average increase in personal income over a three-year period. Higher education is particularly vulnerable to declines in state budgeting flexibility because, unlike the K-12 sector, enrollment may be capped.

An issue that has become increasingly prominent over the last few years and rising in tandem with growth in republican membership in the Legislature (though by no means limited to republicans) has been the issue of productivity. There is a growing consensus that lack of funds is not an impediment to school reform and that more attention should be paid to how current funds are being utilized. The 1994 and 1995 legislatures expressed considerable concern about administrative bloat and the failure of resources to optimally impact classroom activity. In an attempt to get a handle on this issue, the 1994 legislature required the districts to submit a report indicating what percentage of funds are spent in administrative vs. instructional activities. The 1995 legislature went even further requiring the districts to redirect some of their resources away from non-instructional activities to the benefit of instructional activities. Specifically, the districts will be required to approximate in minimal increases of 5% per year the proportion of teacher and teacher aide salary money achieved in the district having the highest ratio of teacher and teacher aide salary to other staff salaries. The difference between the targeted 5% and anything below is to be deducted from the next year's appropriation. The governor, however, is attempting to veto this provision, arguing that it risks disequalizing the state distribution and that the legislature is trying to make policy through appropriation proviso bill. The issue is currently before the courts.

School Finance Litigation

There is no guaranteed base for education in Florida, the lack of which has prompted an adequacy court case in Florida. A coalition of school districts, the state school board association and the state school superintendents association have sued the Florida legislature, the governor and the state board of education. The lawsuit alleges inadequate funding

focusing on three issues: the additional fiscal burdens caused by rapid increasing numbers of students who are expensive to educate, the state mandated improvement and accountability plan (Blueprint 2000) which requires higher achievement levels, and under-funded, state-mandated transportation services. An initial ruling was in favor of the state stating that adequacy was a political determination to be made by the legislative branch and was not a judiciary issue. It is being appealed.

Maintaining Equity

In addition to concerns regarding the resources for education, another challenge facing Florida will be to retain the fundamental equity of the state's funding formula. As stress on statewide revenue sources increases, local districts who do have additional revenue generation capacity will, no doubt, exert pressure to be allowed to tap their local sources. However, if given permission, the state will be increasingly liable to court challenges to the system's fairness. Pressure to allow locally strong areas to independently raise their own local taxes during periods of state budget cutbacks may be hard to resist. Such pressures did materialize during the budget cutbacks of the early nineties. Sarasota and Alachua County School Boards sought legal authority to increase their own discretionary local millage. The Supreme Court, however, confirmed the Legislature's authority to cap discretionary millage. Bills introduced in the 1995 legislature indicate the mounting pressures. One would allow local school boards to levy taxes up to the 10 mill point maximum in the state constitution. Most districts are between 8.5 and 9.5 mills. (This includes a two-mill local option levy for capital expenditures.) It is estimated that there will be a $2 billion shortfall in 1995-96 in the Public Education Capital Outlay Trust. To address this, another bill would increase the maximum discretionary millage that school boards can levy for capital purposes from 2.0 to 2.5 mills. A final proposal would allow each school district to levy a document stamp tax of up to 15 cents per $100 on deed and other real estate documents. Yet another bill would allow each school board to put to a referendum an increase in the county sales tax of a half a penny. In choosing this option, a district would have to freeze the property tax rate for the operating fund for 3 years. Only the latter bill passed.

An issue that surfaced in the 1994-95 legislative session was the calculation of the district cost differential. This formula factor is designed to ensure that variance in cost of living in different geographical areas of the state is adjusted for in the formula. There have been some technical issues surrounding the mix of items in the marketbasket that is used to determine the amount but there have also been broader, more philosophical disputes about the effect of the DCD on district-level salaries and instructional staff quality. The factor was intended to adjust for pre-existing cost differences but questions have arisen whether or not by enabling certain (usually large, urban) districts to compensate their teachers better, the DCD is inadvertently drawing the better and more highly educated teachers to these districts. These concerns have been exacerbated by the rising range of the differentials. The 1995 legislative session accommodated these concerns by cutting the range in half. However, this is just a temporary accommodation and the issue will no doubt service again. It is particularly contentious because it pits the urban districts against the rural ones.

Special Need Students and Rising Costs

Four funding formula changes impacting special students occurred in the 1995 legislative session. They both reflect the growing stress on the state's budget and concerns about rapid growth in enrollments of special populations and the fiscal impact of this growth.

One, the 1995 Legislature capped the funded enrollments in three exceptional education areas: gifted, emotionally handicapped and learning disabled. The House had looked at enrollment growth over the last 11 years comparing broad program areas such as the regular program, the special education program, and the vocational education program, and discovered that while the percent of FTE students in the regular program had grown 27.5%, the percent of exceptional education FTE students had grown 126% during the same time period between 198-84 and 1994-95. At the same time, the actual number of regular students as a percentage of all students had gone down. The Legislature decided to cap the programs at 30% above the state average for these three categories. The three were selected because they were the ones that had shown the greatest growth. When asked about lobbying efforts, legislative staff said that the heaviest lobbying in protest had come from representatives of the gifted program. The other two programs' representatives were not much in sight .

Two, the FTE appropriated in the at-risk category which includes drop-outs and ESOL programs was lowered during the session. The districts had not been using all of the money that had been generated by these students in these programs and the lowered FTE represented an estimate of the unused portion for the upcoming year. There was legislative concern that the enhanced funding weights assigned these special programs were being used to fund the regular programs. However, the issue particularly regarding the ESOL program was very contentious because it had a disproportionately negative impact on the more urban South Florida districts with large immigrant populations.

Three, summer school enrollment were reduced in funding by about 15% and was removed from the regular formula, thus creating a new categorical. This reflects pressure on the state to constrain growth in the education budget. As a categorical, the program will be more visible and vulnerable to future attempts to cutback. The measure hurt the large urban districts, in particular, which have larger summer school programs in Florida.

Four, the new formula for transportation was also restructured. The state mandates that all students living more than two miles from the school they attend must be provided with transportation. State categorical funding of these costs, however, has always been below the actual costs. This year the percent funded by the state rose approximately from 60% to 80%. Furthermore provisions in how the costs were calculated were modified to provide more incentives for efficiency. The old formula was based primarily on the number of miles driven.

The new formula also builds in the number of children in the bus. The new formula also acknowledges the higher costs of transporting special students.

Restructuring

School-based management is the heart and soul of the state's major school reform initiative, called Blueprint 2000 which was enacted in 1991. Blueprint 2000 requires school improvement plans, school advisory councils and school-level report cards. Blueprint 2000 encompasses the concept of continuous improvement borrowed from the quality sciences. In theory, stakeholders convene annually to adapt a school improvement plan (SIP) based on accurate and pertinent data and thoughtful inquiry. The plan is then implemented during the year, its results assessed at the end of the year and a new SIP is adopted based on findings and any new data. Provisions are made for district and state regulatory waivers and for intervention in low performing schools. State goals and standards have been put in place and schools' performance is to be measured against them.

The issue of how much control and under what authority school-based management should be pursued has been a constant point of discussion in the state. Florida has constitutional school boards and for the most part the state deals with school districts, not smaller units within the district in terms of authority and budgeting. Concern has been expressed by minority groups that primarily white-dominated school boards may be less than open to school improvement plans emanating from primarily minority schools. The previous commissioner has been critical of the over-domination of educators on the councils and statutory language has been requested requiring that at least half of the council be non-educators and that the council represent the ethnic makeup of the communities the schools serve. This is all to say that state efforts to date are procedural. There has been no real budgetary or personnel authority given to the SACs, teachers, or the schools as a unit. The teacher unions have asked the legislature to grant greater authority to the School Advisory Councils. But the school boards and school administrators argue that the current advisory role of the SAC is working well.

It is difficult to assess the effect of Blueprint 2000 on school practice. Each of the almost 3,000 schools in the state have produced their own school improvement plans and there have been no content analysis to date of the plans. However, one of the state's large urban counties did try to identify common elements in their district's school plans. This listing indicated that:

- At least 17 elementary schools want to gradually replace traditional letter grades in each subject with "authentic assessments," which measure students' progress by their performance on certain tasks, portfolios of their work and their ability to assess their own progress. Eventually, the change might mean new report cards showing a student's command of skills, not just subjects.

- Eight high schools want to start Tech/Prep programs. The intent is to combine vocational training with more rigorous academic coursework to prepare students for higher paying jobs after graduation.

- Twenty-six schools want to adopt flexible schedules, such as dismissing classes 2-1/2 hours early one day each month to make time for staff planning and training. Other days would be lengthened by seven minutes each to make up the time. Because of the demand for this change, the district is considering early release districtwide on eight days next year.

- Almost all the district's high schools - 13 out of 17 - and more than half of its 22 middle schools propose using block scheduling, which means longer periods and fewer class changes, to reduce discipline problems and improve student performance.

- At least four elementary schools want to start centers to distribute information on parenting skills.

The top five priorities that schools cite for next year:

- Improving math scores.
- Improving reading scores.
- Improving adult literacy.
- Reducing discipline problems.
- Increasing parent involvement.

Schools say their greatest resource needs are:

- Teacher training in instructional techniques. Teachers in schools that have switched to block scheduling want to learn new ways of teaching in 90-minute periods.
- Teacher planning time.
- Computer hardware, software.

There have been only a few minor events in the last two years that have impacted Blueprint 2000 implementation. One, the law provides that each school must submit to the school board a school improvement plan. Issues have arisen over the legitimate role of the school board in approving, not approving or modifying these plans. The issue came to a head with the actions taken by a board with a conservative majority, which sought to delete from a school's plan the proposed pre-K program. A legal ruling determined that the school boards had to approve or disapprove the school plans as a whole but could not modify sections of the plans. Partially in response to this issue, legislation was proposed in the 1995 session that would have strengthened the state's role in supporting schools when challenged by their own school board but the legislation did not pass.

Two, Blueprint 2000 assigns to the local school advisory council the responsibility of defining adequate progress for any goal area and for the definitions to be negotiated with the school board as part of the annual improvement plan. Each school is to report annually on evidence of such progress. There has been some reluctance on the part of schools to determine their own definition of adequate progress and have argued that the state should define it. In a recent program audit of Blueprint 2000 in five districts, the Auditor General found that few schools had actually determined a definition as they are required to do. One district administrator commented that if each school is allowed to determine its own measure of adequate progress, then the more timid the ambition, the more successful the school.

Deregulation

Deregulation has been a major force in Florida since the passage of Blueprint 2000 in 1991. Initially a list of statutory categorical programs were zero-funded and the provisions were considered to be held in abeyance. This strategy has most recently been added to with another provision that states that if the categorical program has not been funded in three consecutive years it is automatically deleted from the state statutes. This has resulted in additional reduction in regulation. It also reflects a subtle shift away from deregulation being a *quid pro quo* for higher outcomes and an end unto itself. Since the 1994 election, deregulation has become, at least rhetorically, one if not the single greatest priority among elected officials in the education arena. The governor made it a central tenet in his most recent state-of-the-state address and stated his goal of a 50% reduction in the entire Florida Administrative Code. The legislature (with much greater republican representation) has also raised it to the top of its legislative agenda. The new commissioner of educator, elected in November 1994, sponsored a bill in the 1995 session that would have automatically sunsetted the entire school code by June 1996. This would have allowed a year within which to debate which provisions should be eliminated, which should be amended and which should be retained. The proposal, however, was packaged in a large omnibus bill which did not pass.

The degree to which substantial deregulation has actually occurred, however, remains disputed. A local administrator produced a list of 371 state statutes governing school districts, noting that the elimination of 77 provisions to date is not even one-third of the whole. Furthermore, over the last two years the state has instituted a number of particularly prescriptive measures. In the curricular area, in 1994 the legislature required instruction about the holocaust and African-American history. As noted in the finance section, the state in 1995 has directed the school districts to reduce the amount of salary dollars spent on all personnel except teachers and teacher's aides. Ironically, this provision came on the heels of elections where sentiment for local control was strong. To quote one administrator, " This is the most unbelievable level of micro-managing I have ever seen."

Choice

A variety of voucher-type programs have appeared over the last three years before the Legislature. None to date have passed out. Nothing in the state statutes prohibit districts from

having open enrollment in the public sector districtwide and two of the state's districts do have full public sector parental choice programs.

Charter school proposals were probably the most discussed and the most controversial educational reform initiatives for the 1995 session. It was a top priority of the new commissioner. It had been supported in the past by the governor (in particular, the lieutenant governor). It received endorsement by the leadership in both parties in both houses. However, it faced fierce though not universal opposition from the black caucus, the Chair of the House Education Committee who is black supported the measure and the teacher unions were vehemently opposed to it. It failed to pass out in the final hours of the session even though separate bills did pass out in each chamber. Its visibility and broad-based support no doubt shows increasing frustration with the pace of reform and the desire to try something more radical than the more measured pace of the school improvement process.

Conclusion

Florida's education system must creatively confront a number of challenges if it is to fulfill its obligation to the state's children in the years ahead. Managing growth, in other word, simply making available sufficient classroom space for the burgeoning student population swelling the schools and colleges' attendance rolls, presents a complex challenge. Financing this growing, increasingly diverse education system presents a companion challenge. The current taxation base in Florida is failing to keep pace with growth and needs to be restructured. Enhancing educational opportunity for all students is a task to be undertaken and a continuing challenge to be met. Keeping the public eye fixed on education in a state in which school age children -nonvoters all - comprise just 16 percent of the population is yet another challenge. How the state confronts these educational challenges and take advantage of the possibilities will have a profound and lasting effect on the health and well-being of the state and its children well into the next century.

Table One

FLORIDA EDUCATION SYSTEM
SIZE AND GROWTH

SECTOR GROWTH	ENROLLMENT	PROJECTED 10-YEAR GROWTH
Pre-K Elementary Secondary	**2.3 million 1995-96**	**27.3% 1990-91/1999-00**
Community Colleges	**325,043 Fall 1993**	**41.9% 1993-94/2002-03**
State Universities	**191,148 Fall 94**	**33.7% 1991-92/1999-00**

Source: Miller, Martha. (1993). "Updated PreK-12 Projections, Florida Public Schools," Tallahassee, FL: Department of Education. Cisek, Edward.(1993). "Projected FTE Enrollments, Florida Community Colleges. Tallahassee, FL: Division of Community Colleges.

Table Two

UNWEIGHTED FTEs BY PROGRAM GROUPS

FISCAL YEARS	K-12 BASIC	%	AT RISK*	%	EXCEPT -IONAL	%	TOTAL
1983-84	1,331,138	93%	23,224	2%	74,200	5%	1,428,562
1988-89	1,506,277	91%	51,311	3%	106,226	6%	1,663,814
1992-93	1,650,890	85%	137,468	7%	144,618	8%	1,932,976
1993-94	1,671,264	84%	163,210	8%	153,021	7%	1,987,495
1994-95	1,699,612	83%	177,350	9%	167,862	8%	2,044,824
1995-96**	1,727,702	82%	194,695	9%	180,862	9%	2,103,259

* Includes Educational Alternatives, Dropout Prevention and English as Second Language (ESOL)
** Projected

Source: December 1994 Enrollment Estimating Conference.